

**THE  
WOLF OF  
WALL STREET**

JORDAN BELFORT

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STOUGHTON

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To my two wonderful children, Chandler and Carter Belfort

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This book is a work of memoir; it is a true story based on my best recollections of various events in my life. Where indicated, the names and identifying characteristics of certain people mentioned in the book have been changed in order to protect their privacy. In some instances, I rearranged and/or compressed events and time periods in service of the narrative, and I recreated dialogue to match my best recollection of those exchanges.

## PROLOGUE

# A BABE IN THE WOODS

**May 1, 1987**

**Y**ou're lower than pond scum," said my new boss, leading me through the boardroom of LF Rothschild for the first time. "You got a problem with that, Jordan?"

"No," I replied, "no problem."

"Good," snapped my boss, and he kept right on walking.

We were walking through a maze of brown mahogany desks and black telephone wire on the twenty-third floor of a glass-and-aluminum tower that rose up forty-one stories above Manhattan's fabled Fifth Avenue. The boardroom was a vast space, perhaps fifty by seventy feet. It was an oppressive space, loaded with desks, telephones, computer monitors, and some very obnoxious yuppies, seventy of them in all. They had their suit jackets off, and at this hour of morning—9:20 a.m.—they were leaning back in their seats, reading their *Wall Street Journals*, and congratulating themselves on being young Masters of the Universe.

Being a Master of the Universe; it seemed like a noble pursuit, and as I walked past the Masters, in my cheap blue suit and clodhopper shoes, I found myself wishing I were one of them. But my new boss was quick to remind me that I wasn't. "Your *job*"—he looked at the plastic nametag on my cheap blue lapel—"Jordan Belfort, is a *connector*, which means you'll be dialing the phone five hundred times a day, trying to get past secretaries. You're not

trying to sell anything or recommend anything or create anything. You're just trying to get business owners on the phone." He paused for a brief instant, then spewed out more venom. "And when you *do* get one on the phone, all you'll say is: 'Hello, Mr. So and So, I have Scott holding for you,' and then you pass the phone to me and start dialing again. Think you can handle that, or is that too complicated for you?"

"No, I can handle it," I said confidently, as a wave of panic overtook me like a killer tsunami. The LF Rothschild training program was six months long. They would be tough months, *grueling* months, during which I would be at the very mercy of assholes like Scott, the yuppie scumbag who seemed to have bubbled up from the fiery depths of yuppie hell.

Sneaking peaks at him out of the corner of my eye, I came to the quick conclusion that Scott looked like a goldfish. He was bald and pale, and what little hair he did have left was a muddy orange. He was in his early thirties, on the tall side, and he had a narrow skull and pink, puffy lips. He wore a bow tie, which made him look ridiculous. Over his bulging brown eyeballs he wore a pair of wire-rimmed spectacles, which made him look fishy—in the goldfish sense of the word.

"Good," said the scumbag goldfish. "Now, here are the ground rules: There are no breaks, no personal calls, no sick days, no coming in late, and no loafing off. You get thirty minutes for lunch"—he paused for effect—"and you better be back on time, because there are fifty people waiting to take your desk if you fuck up."

He kept walking and talking as I followed one step behind, mesmerized by the thousands of orange diode stock quotes that came skidding across gray-colored computer monitors. At the front of the room, a wall of plate glass looked out over midtown Manhattan. Up ahead I could see the Empire State Building. It towered above everything, seeming to rise up to the heavens and scrape the sky. It was a sight to behold, a sight worthy of a young Master of the Universe. And, right now, that goal seemed further and further away.

"To tell you the truth," sputtered Scott, "I don't think you're cut out for this job. You look like a kid, and Wall Street's no place for kids. It's a place for killers. A place for mercenaries. So in *that* sense you're lucky I'm not the one who does the hiring around here." He let out a few ironic chuckles.

I bit my lip and said nothing. The year was 1987, and yuppie assholes like Scott seemed to rule the world. Wall Street was in the midst of a raging bull market, and freshly minted millionaires were being spit out a dime a dozen. Money was cheap, and a guy named Michael Milken had invented something called “junk bonds,” which had changed the way corporate America went about its business. It was a time of unbridled greed, a time of wanton excess. It was the era of the yuppie.

As we neared his desk, my yuppie nemesis turned to me and said, “I’ll say it again, Jordan: You’re the lowest of the low. You’re not even a cold caller yet; you’re a *connector*.” Disdain dripped off the very word. “And ’til you pass your Series Seven, connecting will be your entire universe. And *that* is why you are lower than pond scum. You got a problem with that?”

“Absolutely not,” I replied. “It’s the perfect job for me, because I *am* lower than pond scum.” I shrugged innocently.

Unlike Scott, I don’t look like a goldfish, which made me feel proud as he stared at me, searching my face for irony. I’m on the short side, though, and at the age of twenty-four I still had the soft boyish features of an adolescent. It was the sort of face that made it difficult for me to get into a bar without getting proofed. I had a full head of light brown hair, smooth olive skin, and a pair of big blue eyes. Not altogether bad-looking.

But, alas, I hadn’t been lying to Scott when I’d told him that I felt lower than pond scum. In point of fact, I did. The problem was that I had just run my first business venture into the ground, and my self-esteem had been run into the ground with it. It had been an ill-conceived venture into the meat and seafood industry, and by the time it was over I had found myself on the ass end of twenty-six truck leases—all of which I’d personally guaranteed, and all of which were now in default. So the banks were after me, as was some belligerent woman from American Express—a bearded, three-hundred-pounder by the sound of her—who was threatening to personally kick my ass if I didn’t pay up. I had considered changing my phone number, but I was so far behind on my phone bill that NYNEX was after me too.

We reached Scott’s desk and he offered me the seat next to his, along with some kind words of encouragement. “Look at the bright side,” he quipped. “If by some miracle you don’t get fired for laziness, stupidity, insolence, or tardiness, then you might

actually become a stockbroker one day.” He smirked at his own humor. “And just so you know, last year I made over three hundred thousand dollars, and the other guy you’ll be working for made over a million.”

Over a million? I could only imagine what an asshole the *other* guy was. With a sinking heart, I asked, “Who’s the other guy?”

“Why?” asked my yuppie tormentor. “What’s it to you?”

Sweet Jesus! I thought. Only speak when spoken to, you nincompoop! It was like being in the Marines. In fact, I was getting the distinct impression that this bastard’s favorite movie was *An Officer and a Gentleman*, and he was playing out a Lou Gossett fantasy on me—pretending he was a drill sergeant in charge of a substandard Marine. But I kept that thought to myself, and all I said was, “Uh, nothing, I was just, uh, curious.”

“His name is Mark Hanna, and you’ll meet him soon enough.” With that, he handed me a stack of three-by-five index cards, each of them having the name and phone number of a wealthy business owner on it. “Smile and dial,” he instructed, “and don’t pick up your fucking head ’til twelve.” Then he sat down at his own desk, picked up a copy of *The Wall Street Journal*, and put his black crocodile dress shoes on the desktop and started reading.

I was about to pick up the phone when I felt a beefy hand on my shoulder. I looked up, and with a single glance I knew it was Mark Hanna. He reeked of success, like a true Master of the Universe. He was a big guy—about six-one, two-twenty, and most of it muscle. He had jet-black hair, dark intense eyes, thick fleshy features, and a fair smattering of acne scars. He was handsome, in a downtown sort of way, giving off the hip whiff of Greenwich Village. I felt the charisma oozing off him.

“Jordan?” he said, in a remarkably soothing tone.

“Yeah, that’s me,” I replied, in the tone of the doomed. “Pond scum first-class, at your service!”

He laughed warmly, and the shoulder pads of his \$2,000 gray pin-striped suit rose and fell with each chuckle. Then, in a voice louder than necessary, he said, “Yeah, well, I see you got your first dose of the village asshole!” He motioned his head toward Scott.

I nodded imperceptibly. He winked back. “No worry: I’m the senior broker here; he’s just a worthless piker. So disregard everything he said and anything he might ever say in the future.”



Try as I might, I couldn't help but glance over at Scott, who was now muttering the words: "Fuck you, Hanna!"

Mark didn't take offense, though. He simply shrugged and stepped around my desk, putting his great bulk between Scott and me, and he said, "Don't let him bother you. I hear you're a first-class salesman. In a year from now that moron will be kissing your ass."

I smiled, feeling a mixture of pride and embarrassment. "Who told you I was a great salesman?"

"Steven Schwartz, the guy who hired you. He said you pitched him stock right in the job interview." Mark chuckled at that. "He was impressed; he told me to watch out for you."

"Yeah, I was nervous he wasn't gonna hire me. There were twenty people lined up for interviews, so I figured I better do something drastic—you know, make an impression." I shrugged my shoulders. "He told me I'd need to tone it down a bit, though."

Mark smirked. "Yeah, well don't tone it down *too* much. High pressure's a must in this business. People don't buy stock; it gets sold to them. Don't ever forget that." He paused, letting his words sink in. "Anyway, Sir Scumbag over there was right about one thing: Connecting does suck. I did it for seven months, and I wanted to kill myself every day. So I'll let you in on a little secret"—and he lowered his voice conspiratorially—"You only *pretend* to connect. You loaf off at every opportunity." He smiled and winked, then raised his voice back to normal. "Don't get me wrong; I want you to pass me as many connects as possible, because I make money off them. But I don't want you to slit your wrists over it, 'cause I hate the sight of blood." He winked again. "So take lots of breaks. Go to the bathroom and jerk off if you have to. That's what I did, and it worked like a charm for me. You like jerking off, I assume, right?"

I was a bit taken aback by the question, but as I would later learn, a Wall Street boardroom was no place for symbolic pleasantries. Words like *shit* and *fuck* and *bastard* and *prick* were as common as *yes* and *no* and *maybe* and *please*. I said, "Yeah, I, uh, love jerking off. I mean, what guy doesn't, right?"

He nodded, almost relieved. "Good, that's real good. Jerking off is key. And I also strongly recommend the use of drugs, especially cocaine, because that'll make you dial faster, which is good for me." He paused, as if searching for more words of wisdom, but

apparently came up short. “Well, that’s about it,” he said. “That’s all the knowledge I can impart to you now. You’ll do fine, rookie. One day you’ll even look back at this and laugh; that much I can promise you.” He smiled once more and then took a seat before his own phone.

A moment later a buzzer sounded, announcing that the market had just opened. I looked at my Timex watch, purchased at JCPenney for fourteen bucks last week. It was nine-thirty on the nose. It was May 4, 1987, my first day on Wall Street.

Just then, over the loudspeaker, came the voice of LF Rothschild’s sales manager, Steven Schwartz. “Okay, gentlemen. The futures look strong this morning, and serious buying is coming in from Tokyo.” Steven was only thirty-eight years old, but he’d made over \$2 million last year. (Another Master of the Universe.) “We’re looking at a ten-point pop at the open,” he added, “so let’s hit the phones and rock and roll!”

And just like that the room broke out into pandemonium. Feet came flying off desktops; *Wall Street Journals* were filed away in garbage cans; shirtsleeves were rolled up to the elbows; and one by one brokers picked up their phones and started dialing. I picked up my own phone and started dialing too.

Within minutes, everyone was pacing about furiously and gesticulating wildly and shouting into their black telephones, which created a mighty roar. It was the first time I’d heard the roar of a Wall Street boardroom, which sounded like the roar of a mob. It was a sound I’d never forget, a sound that would change my life forever. It was the sound of young men engulfed by greed and ambition, pitching their hearts and souls out to wealthy business owners across America.

“Miniscribe’s a fucking steal down here,” screamed a chubby-faced yuppie into his telephone. He was twenty-eight, and he had a raging coke habit and a gross income of \$600,000. “Your broker in West Virginia? Christ! He might be good at picking coal-mining stocks, but it’s the eighties now. The name of the game is high-tech!”

“I got fifty thousand July Fifties!” screamed a broker, two desks over.

“They’re out of the money!” yelled another.

“I’m not getting rich on one trade,” swore a broker to his client.

“Are you kidding?” snapped Scott into his headset. “After I split

my commission with the firm and the government I can't put Puppy Chow in my dog's bowl!"

Every so often a broker would slam his phone down in victory and then fill out a buy ticket and walk over to a pneumatic tubing system that had been affixed to a support column. He would stick the ticket in a glass cylinder and watch it get sucked up into the ceiling. From there, the ticket made its way to the trading desk on the other side of the building, where it would be rerouted to the floor of the New York Stock Exchange for execution. So the ceiling had been lowered to make room for the tubing, and it seemed to bear down on my head.

By ten o'clock, Mark Hanna had made three trips to the support column, and he was about to make another. He was so smooth on the phone that it literally boggled my mind. It was as if he were apologizing to his clients as he ripped their eyeballs out. "Sir, let me say this," Mark was saying to the chairman of a Fortune 500 company. "I pride myself on finding the bottom of these issues. And my goal is not only to guide you into these situations but to guide you out as well." His tone was so soft and mellow that it was almost hypnotic. "I'd like to be an asset to you for the long term; to be an asset to your business—and to your family."

Two minutes later Mark was at the tubing system with a quarter-million-dollar buy order for a stock called Microsoft. I'd never heard of Microsoft before, but it sounded like a pretty decent company. Anyway, Mark's commission on the trade was \$3,000. I had seven dollars in my pocket.

By twelve o'clock I was dizzy, and I was starving. In fact, I was dizzy and starving and sweating profusely. But, most of all, I was hooked. The mighty roar was surging through my very innards and resonating with every fiber of my being. I *knew* I could do this job. I knew I could do it *just* like Mark Hanna did it, probably even better. I knew I could be smooth as silk.

To my surprise, rather than taking the building's elevator down to the lobby and spending half my net worth on two frankfurters and a Coke, I now found myself ascending to the penthouse with Mark Hanna standing beside me. Our destination was a five-star restaurant called Top of the Sixes, which was on the forty-first floor of the office building. It was where the elite met to eat, a

place where Masters of the Universe could get blitzed on martinis and exchange war stories.

The moment we stepped into the restaurant, Luis, the *maître d'*, bum-rushed Mark, shaking his hand violently and telling him how wonderful it was to see him on such a glorious Monday afternoon. Mark slipped him a fifty, which caused me to nearly swallow my own tongue, and Luis ushered us to a corner table with a fabulous view of Manhattan's Upper West Side and the George Washington Bridge.

Mark smiled at Luis and said, "Give us two Absolut martinis, Luis, straight up. And then bring us two more in"—he looked at his thick gold Rolex watch—"exactly seven and a half minutes, and then keep bringing them every five minutes until one of us passes out."

Luis nodded. "Of course, Mr. Hanna. That's an excellent strategy."

I smiled at Mark, and said, in a very apologetic tone, "I'm sorry, but I, uh, don't drink." Then I turned to Luis. "You could just bring me a Coke. That'll be fine."

Luis and Mark exchanged a look, as if I'd just committed a crime. But all Mark said was, "It's his first day on Wall Street; give him time."

Luis looked at me, compressed his lips, and nodded gravely. "That's perfectly understandable. Have no fear; soon enough you'll be an alcoholic."

Mark nodded in agreement. "Well said, Luis, but bring him a martini anyway, just in case he changes his mind. Worse comes to worst, I'll drink it myself."

"Excellent, Mr. Hanna. Will you and your friend be eating today or just imbibing?"

What the fuck was Luis talking about? I wondered. It was a rather ridiculous question, considering it was lunchtime! But to my surprise, Mark told Luis that he would not be eating today, that only I would, at which point Luis handed me a menu and went to fetch our drinks. A moment later I found out exactly why Mark wouldn't be eating, when he reached into his suit-jacket pocket, pulled out a coke vial, unscrewed the top, and dipped in a tiny spoon. He scooped out a sparkling pile of nature's most powerful appetite suppressant—namely, cocaine—and he took a giant snort up his right nostril. Then he repeated the process and Hoovered one up his left.

I was astonished. Couldn't believe it! Right here in the restaurant! Among the Masters of the Universe! Out of the corner of my eye I glanced around the restaurant to see if anyone had noticed. Apparently no one had, and, in retrospect, I'm sure that they wouldn't have given a shit anyway. After all, they were too busy getting whacked on vodka and scotch and gin and bourbon and whatever dangerous pharmaceuticals they had procured with their wildly inflated paychecks.

"Here you go," said Mark, passing me the coke vial. "The true ticket on Wall Street; this and hookers."

*Hookers?* That struck me as odd. I mean, I'd never even been to one! Besides, I was in love with a girl I was about to make my wife. Her name was Denise, and she was gorgeous—as beautiful on the inside as she was on the outside. The chances of me cheating on her were less than zero. And as far as the coke was concerned, well, I'd done my share of partying in college, but it had been a few years since I'd touched anything other than pot. "No thanks," I said, feeling slightly embarrassed. "The stuff doesn't really agree with me. It makes me . . . uh . . . nuts. Like I can't sleep or eat, and I . . . uh . . . well, I start worrying about everything. It's really bad for me. Really evil."

"No problem," he said, taking another blast from the vial. "But I promise you that cocaine can definitely help you get through the day around here!" He shook his head and shrugged. "It's a fucked-up racket, being a stockbroker. I mean, don't get me wrong: The money's great and everything, but you're not creating anything, you're not *building* anything. So after a while it gets kinda monotonous." He paused, as if searching for the right words. "The truth is we're nothing more than sleazoid salesmen. None of us has any idea what stocks are going up! We're all just throwing darts at a board and, you know, churning and burning. Anyway, you'll figure all this out soon enough."

We spent the next few minutes sharing our backgrounds. Mark had grown up in Brooklyn, in the town of Bay Ridge, which was a pretty tough neighborhood from what I knew of it. "Whatever you do," he quipped, "don't go out with a girl from Bay Ridge. They're all fucking crazy!" Then he took another blast from his coke vial and added, "The last one I went out with stabbed me with a fucking pencil while I was sleeping! Can you imagine?"

Just then a tuxedoed waiter came over and placed our drinks on

the table. Mark lifted his twenty-dollar martini and I lifted my eight-dollar Coke. Mark said, "Here's to the Dow Jones going straight to five thousand!" We clinked glasses. "And here's to your career on Wall Street!" he added. "May you make a bloody fortune in this racket and maintain just a small portion of your soul in the process!" We both smiled and then clinked glasses again.

In that very instant if someone told me that in just a few short years I would end up owning the very restaurant I was now sitting in and that Mark Hanna, along with half the other brokers at LF Rothschild would end up working for me, I would have said they were crazy. And if someone told me that I would be snorting lines of cocaine off the bar in this very restaurant, while a dozen high-class hookers looked on in admiration, I would say that they had lost their fucking mind.

But that would be only the beginning. You see, at that very moment there were things happening away from me—things that had nothing to do with me—starting with a little something called *portfolio insurance*, which was a computer-driven stock-hedging strategy that would ultimately put an end to this raging bull market and send the Dow Jones crashing down 508 points in a single day. And, from there, the chain of events that would ensue would be almost unimaginable. Wall Street would close down business for a time, and the investment-banking firm of LF Rothschild would be forced to shut its doors. And then the insanity would take hold.

What I offer you now is a reconstruction of that insanity—a satirical reconstruction—of what would turn out to be one of the wildest rides in Wall Street history. And I offer it to you in a voice that was playing inside my head at that very time. It's an ironic voice, a glib voice, a self-serving voice, and, at many times, a despicable voice. It's a voice that allowed me to rationalize anything that stood in my way of living a life of unbridled hedonism. It's a voice that helped me corrupt other people—and manipulate them—and bring chaos and insanity to an entire generation of young Americans.

I grew up in a middle-class family in Bayside, Queens, where words like *nigger* and *spick* and *wop* and *chink* were considered the dirtiest of words—words that were never to be uttered under any circumstances. In my parents' household, prejudices of any sort were heavily discouraged; they were considered the mental processes of inferior beings, of unenlightened beings. I have always

felt this way: as a child, as an adolescent, and even at the height of the insanity. Yet dirty words like that would come to slip off my tongue with remarkable ease, especially as the insanity took hold. Of course, I would rationalize that out too—telling myself that this was Wall Street and, on Wall Street, there's no time for symbolic pleasantries or societal niceties.

Why do I say these things to you? I say them because I want you to know who I really am and, more importantly, who I'm not. And I say these things because I have two children of my own, and I have a lot to explain to them one day. I'll have to explain how their lovable dad, the very dad who now drives them to soccer games and shows up at their parent-teacher conferences and stays home on Friday nights and makes them Caesar salad from scratch, could have been such a despicable person once.

But what I sincerely hope is that my life serves as a cautionary tale to the rich and poor alike; to anyone who's living with a spoon up their nose and a bunch of pills dissolving in their stomach sac; or to any person who's considering taking a God-given gift and misusing it; to anyone who decides to go to the dark side of the force and live a life of unbridled hedonism. And to anyone who thinks there's anything glamorous about being known as a Wolf of Wall Street.

# BOOK I



## CHAPTER I

# A WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

### Six Years Later

The insanity had quickly taken hold, and by the winter of '93 I had this eerie feeling that I'd landed the starring role in one of those reality TV shows, before they came into vogue. The name of my show was *Lifestyles of the Rich and Dysfunctional*, and each day seemed to be growing more dysfunctional than the last.

I had started a brokerage firm named Stratton Oakmont, which was now one of the largest and by far the wildest brokerage firm in Wall Street history. The word on Wall Street was that I had an unadulterated death wish and that I was certain to put myself in the grave before I turned thirty. But that was nonsense, I knew, because I had just turned thirty-one and was still alive and kicking.

At this particular moment, a Wednesday morning in mid-December, I was sitting behind the controls of my twin-engine Bell Jet helicopter on my way from the 30th Street Heliport in midtown Manhattan to my estate in Old Brookville, Long Island, with enough drugs running through my circulatory system to sedate Guatemala.

It was a little after three a.m., and we were cruising along at a hundred twenty knots somewhere over the western edge of Long Island's Little Neck Bay. I remember thinking how remarkable it was that I could fly a straight line while seeing two of everything, when suddenly I began to feel woozy. Then all at once the helicopter was in the midst of a steep dive and I could see the black

waters of the bay rushing toward me. There was this terrible vibration coming from the helicopter's main rotor, and I could hear the panic-stricken voice of my copilot coming through my headset, screaming frantically, "Jesus Christ, boss! Pull up! Pull up! We're gonna crash! Holy shit!"

Then we were level again.

My loyal and trusted copilot, Captain Marc Elliot, was dressed in white and sitting before his own set of controls. But he'd been under strict orders not to touch them unless I either passed out cold or was in imminent danger of smashing into the earth. Now he was flying, which was probably best.

Captain Marc was one of those square-jawed captain-types, the sort who instills confidence in you at the mere sight of him. And it wasn't only his jaw that was square; it was his entire body, which seemed to be comprised of squarish parts, unit-welded together, one atop the other. Even his black mustache was a perfect rectangle, and it sat on his stiff upper lip like an industrial-grade broom.

We'd taken off from Manhattan about ten minutes ago, after a long Tuesday evening that had spiraled way out of control. The night had started out innocently, though—at a trendy Park Avenue restaurant named Canastel's, where I'd had dinner with some of my young stockbrokers. Somehow, though, we'd ended up in the Presidential Suite at the Helmsley Palace, where some very expensive hooker named Venice, with bee-stung lips and loamy loins, had tried using a candle to help me achieve an erection, which turned out to be a lost cause. And that was why I was running late now (about five and a half hours, to be exact), which is to say I was in deep shit, once again, with my loyal and loving second wife, Nadine, the righteously aspiring husband-beater.

You may have seen Nadine on TV; she was that sexy blond who tried to sell you Miller Lite beer during *Monday Night Football*, the one walking through the park with the Frisbee and the dog. She didn't say much in the commercial, but no one seemed to care. It was her legs that got her the job; that and her ass, which was rounder than a Puerto Rican's and firm enough to bounce a quarter on. Whatever the case, I would be feeling her righteous wrath soon enough.

I took a deep breath and tried to right myself. I was feeling pretty good now, so I grabbed hold of the stick, sending a signal to

Captain SpongeBob SquarePants that I was ready to fly again. He looked a bit nervous, so I flashed him a warm, comrade-in-arms sort of smile and offered him a few kind words of encouragement through my voice-activated microphone. “Ooo gone get hazdiz duzy pay fuh dis, buzzy,” said I, who was trying to say, “You’re going to get hazardous duty pay for this, buddy.”

“Yeah, that’s *great*,” replied Captain Marc, releasing the controls to me. “Remind me to collect, if we should happen to make it home alive.” He shook his square head in resignation and amazement, then added, “And don’t forget to close your left eye before you start your descent. It’ll help with the double vision.”

Very shrewd and professional, this square captain of mine was; in fact, he happened to be quite the party animal himself. And not only was he the only licensed pilot in the cockpit, but he also happened to be the captain of my 167-foot motor yacht, the *Nadine*, named after my aforementioned wife.

I gave my captain a hearty thumbs-up sign. Then I stared out the cockpit window and tried to get my bearings. Up ahead I could see the red-and-white-striped smokestacks that rose up from out of the wealthy Jewish suburb of Roslyn. The smokestacks served as a visual cue that I was about to enter the heart of Long Island’s Gold Coast, which is where Old Brookville is located. The Gold Coast is a terrific place to live, especially if you like blue-blooded WASPs and overpriced horses. Personally, I despise both, but somehow I ended up owning a bunch of overpriced horses and socializing with a bunch of blue-blooded WASPs, the latter of whom, I figured, viewed me as a young Jewish circus attraction.

I looked at the altimeter. It was at three hundred feet and spiraling downward. I rolled my neck like a prizefighter stepping into the ring, beginning my descent at a thirty-degree angle, passing over the rolling fairways of the Brookville Country Club and then easing the stick right and cruising over the lush treetops on either side of Hegemans Lane, where I started my final descent onto the driving range at the rear of the property.

Working the foot pedals, I brought the helicopter into a stationary hover about twenty feet above the ground and then attempted to land. A little adjustment with the left foot, a little adjustment with the right foot, a little less power to the collective, a tiny bit of back pressure to the stick, and then all at once the helicopter slammed into the ground and started rising again.

"*Oh, zit!*" I muttered, on the way up. Out of panic, I slammed down the collective and the helicopter began sinking like a stone. And then all at once—*SLAM!*—we landed with a giant thud.

I shook my head in amazement. *What an incredible rush that was!* It wasn't a perfect landing, but who cared? I turned to my beloved captain, and with great pride I slurred, "Am I goodz, buzzy, or am I goodz!"

Captain Marc cocked his square head to the side and raised his rectangular eyebrows high on his square forehead, as if to say, "Are you out of your fucking mind?" But then he began nodding slowly, his face breaking out into a wry smile. "You're good, buddy. I have to admit it. Did you keep your left eye shut?"

I nodded my head. "It zwork like charm," I mumbled. "You za best!"

"Good. I'm glad you think that." He let out a tiny chuckle. "Anyway, I gotta bolt out of here before we get ourselves in trouble. Want me to call the guardhouse to come get you?"

"No, I fine, buzzy. I fine." With that, I undid my safety restraints, gave Captain Marc a mock salute, and opened the cockpit door and climbed out. Then I wheeled about and closed the cockpit door and banged two times on the window, to let him know that I'd been responsible enough to close the door, which gave me a feeling of great satisfaction, insofar as a man in my condition could be sober enough to do that. Then I wheeled about once more and headed for the main house, straight into the eye of Hurricane Nadine.

It was gorgeous outside. The sky was filled with countless stars, twinkling brilliantly. The temperature was unseasonably warm for December. There wasn't a stitch of wind, which gave the air that earthy, woody smell that reminds you of your childhood. I thought of summer nights at sleepaway camp. I thought of my older brother, Robert, whom I'd recently lost touch with after his wife threatened to sue one of my companies for sexual harassment, at which point I took him out for dinner, got too stoned, and then called his wife an asshole. But, still, they were good memories, memories from a much simpler time.

It was about two hundred yards to the main house. I took a deep breath and relished the scent of my property. *What a fine smell it had!* All the Bermuda grass! The pungent smell of pine! And so many soothing sounds! The ceaseless croaking of the crickets! The

mystical hooting of the owls! The rushing water from that ridiculous pond and waterfall system up ahead!

I had purchased the estate from the Chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, Dick Grasso, who bore an odd resemblance to Frank Perdue, the chicken salesman. Then I dumped a few million into various improvements—most of it sucked into that ridiculous pond and waterfall system and the remainder sucked into a state-of-the-art guardhouse and security system. The guardhouse was manned twenty-four hours a day by two armed bodyguards, both of whom were named Rocco. Inside the guardhouse were banks of TV monitors that received images from twenty-two security cameras positioned throughout the estate. Each camera was tied to a motion sensor and floodlight, creating an impenetrable ring of security.

Just then I felt a tremendous gust of air, so I craned up my neck to watch the helicopter ascend into the darkness. I found myself taking small steps backward, and then the small steps became bigger steps, and then . . . *Oh, shit! I was in trouble! I was about to hit the dirt!* I wheeled about and took two giant steps forward, extending my arms out like wings. Like an out-of-control ice skater I stumbled this way and that, trying to find my center of gravity. And then, all at once . . . a blinding light!

*“What the fuck!”* I put my hands to my eyes, shielding myself from the searing pain of the floodlights. I had tripped one of the motion sensors and was now a victim of my own security system. The pain was excruciating. My eyes were dilated from all the drugs, my pupils as big as saucers.

Then, the final insult: I tripped in my spiffy crocodile dress shoes and went flying backward and landed flat on my back. After a few seconds the floodlight went off, and I slowly lowered my arm to the side. I pressed my palms against the soft grass. *What a wonderful spot I picked to fall on!* And I was an expert at falling, knowing exactly how to do it without hurting myself. The secret was to just go with it, like a Hollywood stuntman did. Better still, my drug of choice—namely, Quaaludes—had the wonderful effect of turning my body into rubber, which further protected me from harm.

I resisted the thought that it was the Quaaludes that had made me fall in the first place. After all, there were so many advantages to using them that I considered myself lucky to be addicted to

them. I mean, how many drugs made you feel as wonderful as they did, yet didn't leave you with a hangover the next day? And a man in my position—a man burdened with so many grave responsibilities—couldn't afford to be hungover, now could he!

And my wife . . . well, I guess she'd earned her scene with me, but still; did she really have that much reason to be angry? I mean, when she married me she knew what she was getting into, didn't she? She had been my mistress, for Chrissake! That spoke volumes, didn't it? And what had I really done tonight? Nothing so terrible, or at least nothing that she could prove!

And around and around that twisted mind of mine went—rationalizing, justifying, then denying, and then rationalizing some more, until I was able to build up a healthy head of righteous resentment. Yes, I thought, there were certain things that went on between rich men and their wives that dated all the way back to the caveman days, or at least back to the Vanderbilts and Astors. There were liberties, so to speak, certain liberties that men of power were entitled to, that men of power had earned! Of course this wasn't the sort of thing I could just come out and say to Nadine. She was prone to physical violence and she was bigger than me, or at least the same size, which was just one more reason to resent her.

Just then I heard the electric whir of the golf cart. That would be Rocco Night, or perhaps Rocco Day, depending on when their shifts changed. Either way, some Rocco was coming out to fetch me. It was amazing how everything always seemed to work out. When I fell down, there was always someone to pick me up; when I got caught driving under the influence, there was always some crooked judge or corrupt police officer to make an accommodation; and when I passed out at the dinner table and found myself drowning in the soup du jour, there was always my wife, or, if not her, then some benevolent hooker, who would come to my aid with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

It was as if I was *bulletproof* or something. How many times had I cheated death? It was impossible to say. But did I really want to die? Was my guilt and remorse eating at me that voraciously—so much, in fact, that I was trying to take my own life? I mean, it was mind-boggling, now that I thought about it! I had risked my life a thousand times yet hadn't gotten so much as a scratch. I had driven drunk, flown stoned, walked off the edge of a building, scuba dived during a blackout, gambled away millions of dollars

at casinos all over the world, and I still didn't look a day over twenty-one.

I had lots of nicknames: Gordon Gekko, Don Corleone, Kaiser Soze; they even called me the King. But my favorite was the Wolf of Wall Street, because that was me to a T. I was the ultimate wolf in sheep's clothing: I looked like a kid and acted like a kid, but I was no kid. I was thirty-one going on sixty, living dog years—aging seven years for every year. But I was rich and powerful and had a gorgeous wife and a four-month-old baby daughter who was living, breathing perfection.

Like they say, it was all good, and it all seemed to work. Somehow, and I wasn't sure how, I would end up beneath a \$12,000 silk comforter, sleeping inside a royal bedchamber draped with enough white Chinese silk to make silk parachutes for an entire squadron of paratroopers. And my wife . . . well, she would forgive me. After all, she always had.

And with that thought, I passed out.